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SUBJECT: DEAN OF INDEPENDENT MEDIA DISCUSSES CNDD AND WORRIES ABOUT PIVI

REF: CONAKRY 000839

¶1. Summary: PAO and the LES press assistant met the Director General of Le Lynx/La Lance January 13 to discuss the coup d'etat and the implications for the independent media. Souleymane Diallo said that for the moment the CNDD does not pose a threat to the free press. He would rather have the CNDD than Conte's constitutional successor Sompore running the government. However, he expressed great concern over the appointment of Claude Pivi to the cabinet, and worried about retaliation for a story he published about Pivi. He was also concerned about the treatment of the press during the visit of Senegalese President Wade, the recent shake-up at the CNC and the need to hold elections soon. End summary.

¶2. Diallo said that the CNDD does not pose a threat to the media, at least for the time being. However, he called Claude Pivi the "executioner" of the media and was clearly worried about Pivi retaliating for a story La Lance published about the brutal torture of five Cameroonians and one Guinean by Pivi and his entourage. The paper featured graphic front-page photos of the wounds sustained by the victims. Diallo said Pivi has threatened on numerous occasions to get his revenge on Le Lynx/La Lance. Pivi did not threaten Diallo directly, but Diallo believes he could destroy the newsroom facilities of Le Lynx/La Lance. (Note: Prior to the coup, Pivi sent his henchmen to seize copies of La Lance after they published a front page picture of President Conte that suggested he was in ill-health. Conte died a few days later.)

¶3. Diallo noted that, thus far, the CNDD has not posed a threat to the media, but neither has it opened its doors. He noted the recent visit of Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, where the independent media was shut out of the room where the meeting between Wade and the CNDD took place. The government-controlled media was allowed access. However, Diallo praised the CNDD for taking action after one of their own tried to seize control of the CNC. Diallo noted that the perpetrators of the seizure, Richard Kamano and Siaka Kouyat, are still under arrest. See reftel.

¶4. Diallo expressed his support for the coup, even though it is illegal. He would prefer the coup to the leadership of former President of the National Assembly Sompore and constitutional successor to President Conte. Diallo disparaged Sompore, even though he said he knew him well. He did not believe Sompore was qualified to be president. He said that Sompore relied heavily on marabouts-traditional African spiritualists, who told him that he needed to hire more women at the National Assembly. This, according to Diallo, is why there were so many young women working at the National Assembly when Conte died.

¶5. While Diallo expressed support for the coup, his opinion of the CNDD was more guarded. He noted that Dadis Camara expresses the concerns of many Guineans, but he wonders whether he will be able to come up with solutions to the problems facing Guinea. Diallo noted that he does not know Dadis personally, but some of his journalists do. He questions Dadis's commitment to combat corruption and narco-trafficking given his prior assignment as head of the fuel depot for the military and his close ties to Ousmane Conte, the former President's son.

¶6. Diallo hopes that civil society and the political parties will join together to push the CNDD out of power. Otherwise, Guinea will

face another long period of military rule. He also encouraged the U.S. to use its influence to pressure the CNDD to hold free and fair elections, and to help restructure the CENI.

17. Comment: Diallo's cautious attitude towards the CNDD is understandable, particularly considering the threat posed by Pivi. It will likely be reflected by other independent media in Guinea. When asked whether the independent press would continue to express itself freely, or exercise prior restraint during the period of the junta, Diallo suggested the latter would be more likely. The threat from Pivi is significant and is not limited to Le Lynx/La Lance. Other journals have written unflattering articles about him. In addition to seizing copies of La Lance, Pivi seized copies of Les Echos de Guinee when it published an article saying Pivi missed his opportunity to seize power during the military mutiny in May 2008. Le Lynx/La Lance is the largest and one of the most respected independent newspaper group in Guinea, and Diallo is the head of OGUIDEM, an organization that promotes ethics in the media. An attack on him or his newspaper would send a deep chill throughout the independent press in Guinea. End comment.

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